

# THE METHOD OF SENATOR McCARTHY

## *Its Origins, Its Uses, and Its Prospects*

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*I feel strongly about labelling products for what they are. Poison should be labelled as poison; treason should be labelled as treason; truth should be labelled as truth; lies should be labelled as lies.*

—From *McCarthyism: The Fight for America*, by Senator Joe McCarthy

### I

TOWARD the end of 1948 and beginning of 1949, various reputable American publications reported charges that a number of Germans convicted of war crimes had been subjected to atrocious brutalities by American investigators. One group of German war criminals in particular, SS troops convicted of having massacred hundreds of disarmed American prisoners of war near Malmédy during the Battle of the Bulge, was mentioned.

In July 1946, 73 Germans had been tried for taking part in these massacres; 43 were

given death sentences. These verdicts then went through the regular prescribed series of reviews, and by March 1948, the number of death sentences had been reduced to 12. In May 1948 a petition was presented to the Supreme Court of the United States, by Willis M. Everett, Jr., the American defense counsel, charging irregularities in the trial, and brutality in the investigations which had preceded it. There were supporting affidavits by the convicted men, recording in detail the physical abuse they claimed to have undergone at the hands of the army investigators almost two years before.

This petition was rejected by a 4 to 4 decision. Mr. Everett then presented his case to Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall. Mr. Royall stayed the executions, and appointed a commission consisting of Justice Gordon Simpson of the Supreme Court of Texas and Judge Edward Van Roden, of the Orphans Court of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, to go to Germany to investigate the Malmédy death sentences, as well as other death sentences not yet executed—a total of 139 in all.

BY THIS time, the Malmédy case had become a *cause célèbre* in Germany. Many Germans were naturally delighted at the chance to charge atrocities to Americans. German clergymen of very high position took up the cause, and they and their representatives appeared before the Simpson-Van Roden Commission. On October 6, the two judges recommended the commutation of the 12 remaining Malmédy death sentences.

It was shortly after this that stories on the case came out in the American press. Judge Van Roden returned and spoke publicly about it; a number of Congressmen and Senators—from constituencies with numerous

IN ALL the furor about "McCarthyism"—a term which is used in some quarters to smear any and every effort to expose and root out the Communist conspiracy—few have troubled to examine concretely the political methods of the man McCarthy himself. Here NATHAN GLAZER studies those methods in their pristine state, so to speak, as originally forged by the Senator in an early and by now almost forgotten effort to establish himself as a political figure. Analyzing Senator McCarthy's performance in the 1949 Senate hearings on the Malmédy massacre investigations, Mr. Glazer attempts to point out for us the political elements from which Senator McCarthy first compounded his career—and speculates as to how far he may hope to get by peddling his peculiar nostrum. Mr. Glazer is an associate editor of COMMENTARY and a frequent contributor to its pages.



voters of German origin—demanded investigations. In February 1949, an article appeared by Judge Van Roden in the *Progressive* magazine which contained, among other sensational statements, the following: "All but two of the Germans in the 139 cases we investigated had been kicked in the testicles beyond repair. This was standard operating procedure with American investigators." Van Roden's article was inserted in the *Congressional Record* by a Wisconsin Congressman on March 10, 1949. On March 5, 1949, the *New York Times* capped a number of first-page reports on the alleged atrocities with a page-one story which ran over for three columns on an inside page, and which reported in detail the charges that had been made.

This was the last time the story made the front page of the *Times*, for on April 18 a full-dress investigation by a Congressional subcommittee began and it soon emerged that a fantastically successful propaganda operation had been the source of these charges that had so damaged American prestige in Germany. After extensive hearings the committee finally reported, on October 13, 1949, that there was literally no truth at all in them; that the accused had been treated with consideration far surpassing that which American police at home generally showed suspects; that a few of the hundreds of suspects questioned had perhaps been kicked or slapped—but that was the full extent of the brutality uncovered by an investigation which took testimony from everyone it could locate in Germany and America who had had anything at all to do with the prisoners—from commanders down to turnkeys, prison doctors to mess attendants.\* (These conclusions were carried on page 8 of the *New York Times* on October 15.)

The case had begun to collapse almost with the first witnesses. Little was left of it when Judge Van Roden, the lion demand-

ing justice for America's fallen enemies, suddenly turned into a vague lamb at the hearings. It transpired that he had not written the article in the *Progressive*, but that James Finucane of the National Council for the Prevention of War, which had taken a marked interest in the Malmédy case, had written it on the basis of a speech by Mr. Van Roden; Mr. Van Roden himself was compelled to withdraw just about all of its sensational charges. He testified: "Where it says 'All but two of the Germans, in the 139 cases we investigated, had been kicked in the testicles beyond repair,' I did not say that. What I said was all but two were recommended for commutation to life imprisonment . . ." (p. 312).

## II

THIS investigation becomes of peculiar interest today because during its course Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin conducted the first trial run of the political method that was soon to bring him fame and fortune, and make him the most controversial political figure in America. Since this investigation never got to the first page of the *New York Times*, and very few people were aware it was going on, Senator McCarthy could behave in a far less inhibited way than became necessary in subsequent phases of his career. At the Tydings Subcommittee investigation of his charges of Communist infiltration of the State Department in 1950, Senator McCarthy was the questioned, not the questioner, and since his every word might be weighed for possible perjury, he naturally spoke with a certain unwonted caution.

That was the last time such caution was necessary. By the time of the next Congressional investigation in which his name figured, that of the background of Senator Tydings' surprising defeat in the election of 1950, Senator McCarthy had become a formidable figure. While his staff was questioned at length as to their role in a campaign which broke a good number of the laws of the State of Maryland, the Senator

\**Malmédy Massacre Investigation. Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate. . . . Washington, 1949.*



himself, clearly the prime mover, was never called. In the next Senatorial investigation of the doings of Senator McCarthy, that occasioned by Senator Benton's charges, Senator McCarthy's colleagues were so frightened they did not even question his staff, let alone the Senator himself.\*

But at these Malmédy hearings, Senator McCarthy was not the subject of investigation and operated at his ease. Even though he was only a guest of the subcommittee, invited because of the very strong interest he had shown in the case, he completely dominated the hearings. As at a private showing, we watch the first rushes, crude in some degree—but because of that all the more revealing—which were to be shaped less than a year later into a most finished and effective performance.

**S**ENATOR MCCARTHY was thirty-eight years old when he took his seat as junior

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\*We do not mean to suggest that the Senators' terror, though perhaps understandable, is justified: other factors than the intervention of McCarthy's assistants may have been responsible for Senator Tydings' surprising defeat in Maryland in the election of 1950; and certainly Senator Benton's winning margin in 1950 was so small he could have been expected to lose in 1952 in any case. However, as to the real fear of Senator McCarthy felt by many other Senators, there can be no question: Washington correspondents like Joseph Harsch and Doris Fleeson attest to it; the very full biography, *McCarthy: The Man, the Senator, the "Ism,"* by Jack Anderson and Ronald May, published by Beacon Press last year, argues persuasively to the same effect. (I am greatly indebted to this book for much of the information on which this article is based.) The report of the subcommittee investigating Senator Benton's charges against Senator McCarthy (*Investigations of Senators Joseph McCarthy and William Benton . . . Report of the Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections to the Committee on Rules and Administration*, Washington, 1952) would be in itself decisive on this point. Senator McCarthy refused to testify before the subcommittee on facts suggesting his having been improperly influenced, yet the subcommittee did not subpoena him or make any recommendations as to action against him. Its one Republican member, Senator Hendrickson, was referred to by Senator McCarthy as a "living miracle, the miracle being he has lived so long without brains or guts"; after this attack Senator Hendrickson was observed on the Senate floor in friendly conversation with McCarthy.

Senator from Wisconsin. During the first three years of his term his activities were not divorced from immediate material ends, as was evidenced on at least two occasions.

He fought in the Senate to end postwar controls on sugar, which aimed primarily to withhold enough of that commodity from commercial use to insure an adequate supply for consumers; and shortly after, Mr. Russell Arundel, owner of two soft-drink plants, at a particularly crucial juncture in Senator McCarthy's financial situation in December 1947, put up collateral for a personal note of the Senator's for \$20,000.† We find a second transaction, almost a year later, involving the Lustron Corporation, which had received \$37,500,000 in government loans between 1947 and 1949, and went bankrupt early in 1950. During the course of its life this corporation, which made pre-fabricated houses, had been totally dependent on government favor. Senator McCarthy, as vice-chairman of the joint House-Senate Committee on Housing, helped frame an act, passed by the Senate on August 10, 1948, that authorized the RFC to lend up to \$50,000,000 to pre-fab manufacturers. On November 12, 1948, at another crucial juncture in Senator McCarthy's tangled financial history, Lustron handed \$10,000 over to him.‡

Our major concern, however, is not with Senator McCarthy's financial doings, but rather with the second three years of his first term, when, looking forward to reelection, he decided that his political fences needed mending. His varied activities up to

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†*Investigations of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy . . .* pp. 38-39.

‡*Ibid.*, pp. 15-19. It is well known that this was an "honorarium" for a pamphlet. But it is clear that Senator McCarthy, for one, understood that the size of the sum involved might lead to questions, and he tried to answer them in advance. When reporters questioned him three months later as to how much he had received, he said, "It's embarrassingly small. Besides, I have to split it with ten people who helped me" (*McCarthy*, p. 155). It was only when his state income tax returns were investigated that it was discovered that the "embarrassingly small" sum almost equaled his year's salary as a Senator—and that he had split it with no one.



that time had in no way served to define him politically; his political course had been one of simple and undistinguished opportunism. The Malmédy case was the occasion on which Senator McCarthy, after three years in office, put the first touch to the political image he was to create of himself. The Malmédy case was also to serve as a test, on a national scale and a national issue, of the specific political technique that he had already been long using on a personal and a local scale. The political character McCarthy chose to assume at this time was accidental—just as accidental as the fact that he began his political career in 1936 as a Democrat, running for nomination as district attorney, and later turned Republican—but the technique was essential, and it is as impossible to separate it from the person as it is to change the spots on a leopard. It leaps out at us from the first pages of the Malmédy hearings.

### III

LET us turn to an early passage. Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall, the first witness to appear before the subcommittee, is presenting the background of the case. The regular members of the subcommittee—Senator Baldwin (R., Conn.), Senator Kefauver (D., Tenn.), and Senator Hunt (D., Wyoming), have been content to listen—as indeed they do through most of these hearings. Guest-member McCarthy is conducting a long line of questioning.

Senator McCARTHY. . . . let us assume that in checking case No. X, you find that all these things that . . . the Army Committee [Board of Review] said existed, assume you find them all true, and that officer Jones who was assigned to prosecute, that No. 1, he takes a ration card away from the accused's family; assume you find that out, and that is part of the findings in the Army Committee's report . . . assume that you believe that in the dead of night they took this man down and put a black hood over his head and put him before a table . . . with a phony prosecutor sitting behind the table and assigned a member of the prosecuting staff to act as his defense counsel, and they convicted him and sentenced him to hang in the morning; assume that you find that along about

2 or 3 hours before he is allegedly to hang, the phony defense counsel comes in and says, "if you will sign this confession, your family will get their ration card restored to them, you won't hang, you will get off with 5 or 10 years." Assume . . . as the Army Committee states, that physical violence was used on other witnesses to make them testify along a certain line . . . do I understand you to say that [in such a case] you will not bring the Army man up for court martial . . . ?

Secretary ROYALL. You have answered my question, Senator, by describing a most atrocious set of circumstances. . . . If a case of that kind were found . . . I should favor disciplinary action. . . .

Senator McCARTHY. You understand, for the record, that I recited nothing that is not in the Army report. (pp. 16-17.)

This report from which, as Senator McCarthy is careful to point out, he is merely "reciting," is published as an appendix to these hearings. In it we find the following passages:

[On ration cards]: "It is alleged that representatives of the prosecution staff threatened harm to relatives of the accused if they did not confess, such as deprivation of ration cards. . . . The Board finds it is probable in certain instances such threats may have been made. . . ."

[On the "mock trials" that Senator McCarthy is purportedly describing]: "No sentence was pronounced. . . ."

[On violence]: ". . . the description of physical violence that is given in the affidavits of the accused is exaggerated beyond anything that might have taken place. . . ." (pp. 1201, 1200, 1203.)\*

Note that, in Senator McCarthy's "recitation," the charge that representatives of the prosecution staff told prisoners that the ration cards of their relatives would be taken away, which the Board finds "probable in certain instances," becomes not only certain—but Senator McCarthy adds as a fact

\*It later turned out that one of those assigned to this Board of Review was an officer who had acted as defense counsel in the trial; that the defense point of view was more than adequately represented in the course of the day-to-day deliberations of this Board of Review, while the prosecution point of view was presented only by written statements; and that, in general, this report considerably overstated the situation.



what is not even charged: that they actually *were* taken away.

Note that the alleged "mock trials"—which, the Board had pointed out, took place in an ordinary interrogation room and, as far as we can tell, in daylight, and whose aim, it later developed, was to simulate the solemnity of the judge-conducted investigations of Continental law—become, in Senator McCarthy's account, horrendous affairs in which confessions are extracted under the shadow of the gallows.

And note finally that the violence which the army Board finds occasional becomes an important means for the extraction of confessions.

**L**ET us consider another piece of testimony. On the stand is Justice Gordon Simpson, who had publicly dissociated himself from the extreme charges that had been made by Judge Van Roden, with whom he had served on the commission reviewing death sentences passed on German war criminals.

Senator McCARTHY. You knew it was claimed that these men sentenced to death were crippled for life because they had been kicked in the genitals. Didn't you think it was important to send a doctor to examine two or three of those men?

Mr. SIMPSON. I suppose I saw it and forgot it, since you say it is there. I never saw a claim that a man had been injured for life because of a blow in the genitals.

Senator McCARTHY. Didn't you read over Colonel Everett's affidavit?

Mr. SIMPSON. Is it in his affidavit?

Senator McCARTHY. It is in these documents, I would say, 10 or 15 times in the documents supporting Everett's application. I do wish you would look these over and discover what you have overlooked. (p. 217.)

But meanwhile, nemesis, in the form of Mr. Chambers, staff member of the subcommittee, is going through Colonel Everett's petition to discover whether Judge Simpson's delinquency is really so grave:

Senator BALDWIN. Mr. Chambers just advises me that an examination of Colonel Everett's affidavit, which was filed in the Supreme

Court, and which was the one which was referred to here, apparently shows no claim that there was any number of men or any at all who were damaged or injured in private parts as the results of the conduct of the investigators for the prosecution. Is that correct? We can examine that further. . . .

Senator McCARTHY. Just so we don't get Colonel Chambers or anyone else in a misstatement, the affidavits filed by Colonel Everett and supporting documents set forth very definitely the physical violence used in order to get confessions.

Mr. CHAMBERS. That is correct.

Senator McCARTHY. Let's not distort the record. . . .

Mr. CHAMBERS. Mr. Chairman, the point that I took a look at this record, as did Senator McCarthy's counsel, was to resolve the point that seemed to be in issue between Judge Simpson and Senator McCarthy, in which Judge Simpson said he did not recall having seen a charge of 139 or some such number of people being ruined for life by being kicked in the testicles.

In an effort to clarify that particular point, I have checked through here and it is not in the record, and I believe Mr. McCarthy's counsel will concur in that.

Senator McCARTHY. All but 2 out of 139. . . . I saw it there, and there is no question about the fact that Colonel Everett's affidavit sets forth in detail the physical beatings and the type of punishment used in order to get the confessions.

Mr. CHAMBERS. That is correct.

Senator McCARTHY. Good.

Mr. CHAMBERS. Colonel Everett's petition before the Supreme Court alleged many different types of pressures, among which were beatings, brutality, mock trials, and things of that kind.

Senator McCARTHY. Teeth being kicked out, genitals being ruined, it is all in the affidavits.

Mr. CHAMBERS. There is nothing on the latter point. That is the point I am trying to make. (pp. 216-217.)

**F**INALLY, a third passage: a Mr. Bailey, who had worked as a stenographer for a few weeks during the investigation in Germany, and was clearly motivated by resentment against his supervisors—even so, he was unable to give any direct testimony as to mistreatment—is testifying:

Mr. BAILEY. [Lieutenant Perl] was down there in the garb of a first lieutenant of the



American Army. He had his wife along, dressed as a United States Wac. She had never been in this country; she had spent, as I understand it, 4 or 5 years in German concentration camps. He had escaped from one after being sentenced to death. . . .

Senator McCARTHY. Do you know whether he was an American citizen or not?

Mr. BAILEY. I do not know. My opinion is that he was not.

Senator McCARTHY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask permission to ask Mr. Ellis [Lieutenant Perl's superior officer] whether this man Perl and his wife had been in the concentration camp, whether they were American citizens or not.

Colonel ELLIS. Perl is an American citizen. As I recall, he came to the United States in 1938 or 1939. He was apprehended at the time of the Anschluss, and was held in prison a short time . . . if he was ever sentenced to death, I never heard of it. . . . His wife was an Aryan, and because of her befriending Jews, this is only hearsay you understand, she was picked up sometime during the war and held at some camp for two years, is my recollection. . . . Lieutenant Perl will be here, and he can give you the story. This is just hearsay. (p. 171.)

Shortly thereafter, Senator McCarthy is questioning Judge Simpson:

Senator McCARTHY. Let me ask you this question if I may: The testimony this morning was—and apparently it is unquestioned—that the chief investigator, one of them had been sentenced to death by Hitler's gang, he had escaped, his wife had been held in a German concentration camp for four years. . . . (p. 200.)

[Only a few hours before, Senator McCarthy had said: "There is only one thing which I claim to have, an unimpeachable memory when I am examining a witness" (p. 144).]

WHAT, of course, emerges in all three passages—and in scores of others that I have not quoted—is that Senator McCarthy is engaged in a process of continuous distortion. But Senator McCarthy's peculiar contribution to the use of distortion in politics is the invention, or at any rate the very original elaboration, of what Richard Rovere has called the "multiple untruth"—the misstatement inserted in a parenthetical remark, a subordinate clause, or even

an adjective. The virtue of this technique is that it is possible to pack so much distortion into a given quantity of words as to make it certain that any effort to correct every point of error will only bore the reader. Consider, for example, the interesting articles in *America* for December 13 and 20, 1952, trying to clear up just one brief passage in Senator McCarthy's famous address on Governor Stevenson. The job of simply clearing away the barbed wire of unimportant misstatements of no apparent relevance to the point is itself Herculean. Perhaps this is just the point—the unimportant serves to protect the important. I do not wish to suggest that this is entirely conscious: the work of every great innovator is based to some extent on pure instinct.

Now other politicians, as we know, distort too. In what way, then, is McCarthy an innovator? Respectable politicians will assert that the Republicans were completely responsible for the depression, or the Democrats completely responsible for the war in Korea. But we do not speak of such matters; this is not the kind of hyperbolic political rhetoric that is employed as a rule by Senator McCarthy. Politicians may sometimes get themselves quite far out on a limb out of an excess of passion; thus it is possible, by forcing charity, to ascribe Senator McCarran's charge that all critics of the McCarran Act are Communists, or dupes of Communists, to the blindness of a genuine passion. Senator McCarran does not speak with his eyes open, so to speak. But we do not detect this kind of passion in the affable McCarthy.

It would be more correct to classify him with those out-and-out demagogues who appeal to passions which they themselves do not hold, or do not take seriously. But when we take a closer look at such demagogues—some old Populist leaders, perhaps, some more recent Southerners—we find that Senator McCarthy fails to conform to their type in one important respect: he is "modern," "scientific," they are not.

Senator McCarthy operates with "documents," and his favored pose for photog-



raphers, as we may see on the back of his book *McCarthyism*, shows him taking a decisive "document" out of his briefcase. Senators Tom Watson, Theodore Bilbo, and Huey Long appealed with their tall tales to the prejudices and ignorance of an uneducated audience. Coming from backward states, and speaking for backward groups, they cannot with any justice be likened to Senator McCarthy, who comes from a state often considered the most enlightened and advanced in the Union. At this place and at this time it would not be an exaggeration to describe Senator McCarthy as the inventor of a new technique of distortion.

**I**N THE few passages we have here taken from the record, we discern at least four quite different kinds of distortion.

First, there is the simple creation of fact to serve the needs of a particular moment. Second, there is the misreading of documents.\* Third, there is the effrontery when caught, which is in effect a repetition of the original offense: Senator McCarthy is never on the defensive, he always repeats his charges. But fourth, Senator McCarthy, when caught and brazening it out, rapidly covers his tracks by altering his previous statements—while insisting that they are still the same.

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\*Which is why Senator McCarthy, so often waving documents, sometimes has to make a swift getaway before reporters—or even his fellow Senators—can see them. There are the remarkable cases reported in *McCarthy*:

"... when McCarthy rose in the Senate in April 1950 and read from a sheet of paper that he claimed was a letter from Owen Lattimore to Joseph Barnes, he waved the so-called letter and invited his fellow Senators to come to his desk to read it for themselves. To McCarthy's surprise, Senator Herbert Lehman of New York accepted the invitation; but Joe refused to show it to him and brushed him aside. . . . On a television broadcast of March 16, 1952, Joe claimed to be reading from a statement given by Senator William Benton to the Senate elections sub-committee. He held up 'a document' and 'quoted' what he said was a note at the head of the text: 'No part of this must be used by the press until I have become immune as I testified.' The next week, the television network was forced to report that not a word of this had appeared on the Benton statement. . . ." (p. 309.)

Thus, in the exchange with Mr. Chambers, Senator McCarthy at one point implies that he has been talking only about "physical violence" in general, and Mr. Chambers has to agree with him that Colonel Everett's petition does speak about that. Then, emboldened, he decides to return to the charge that injury to genitals is alleged in the petition.

But these are all fairly simple forms of distortion for such a master as McCarthy. Consider the following, in which a number of types are combined to imply or charge that someone else is lying; this is one of the Senator's favorite gambits.

Senator McCARTHY. . . . Did he, while on the stand, claim to the court he had been *beaten and mistreated*? [My italics.]

Mr. PERL. No sir.

Senator McCARTHY. You are certain of that?

Mr. PERL. Yes.

Senator McCARTHY. You are sure?

Mr. PERL. I read the trial record last night again.

After thus carefully setting the stage, Senator McCarthy resumes a few pages later:

Senator McCARTHY. In view of your statement, Mr. Perl, that this man never claimed on the stand during the trial that he had been *mistreated* [my italics], I want to refresh your memory, if I may.

Senator McCarthy then quotes from the testimony of the person under consideration, who asserts, indeed, that he had been verbally abused but does not refer to beatings.

Senator McCARTHY. In view of the fact that he did so testify, do you want to change your testimony in which you said that on the stand he made no claim he had been *mistreated* [my italics], or do you not consider that mistreatment. . . . I now have read to you from the record. I ask you in view of that, do you want to change your statement that having read the record, you find that he never made any claims of *mistreatment*? [My italics.]

Mr. PERL. I believe, sir, that I spoke of beating here yesterday. (pp. 265, 268-9.)



WHEN Mr. Perl evaded this artful trap the Senator decided to stage one of the most remarkable scenes ever beheld, I am sure, in a Senate hearing chamber—and, in so doing, gave us, I believe, the key to his persistent inability to reproduce the facts as they are.

Senator McCARTHY. Mr. Chairman, I think there is one way in which this investigation could be concluded very rapidly to the satisfaction of everyone. . . . We have back in my State and a number of States, a practice in criminal cases—I have tried a lot of murder cases in which we used it—where we give the defendant in a murder case the option of submitting himself to the lie detector. . . .

I wonder, Mr. Perl, if you would be willing to submit to the Kieler lie detector test. There is no physical punishment involved, no kicking in the groin, or anything like that. I wonder if you would be willing?

Mr. PERL. Do you believe, sir, that the lie detector is the method, as a lawyer, purely reliable, that the life of people should depend entirely on it, that the reputation of the United States, which is torn down by this allegation now in all the Communist-controlled countries, should depend entirely on this matter?

If this commission believes it to be correct, I am ready to submit to a lie detector. I believe we would make ourselves ridiculous in Europe. . . . I have no objection against the lie-detector. . . .

Senator McCARTHY. I have the utmost confidence in them, you see. . . . I think you are lying. I do not think you can fool the lie detector. You may be able to fool us. I have been told you are very, very smart. I know you are a psychologist and a psychiatrist and work at it. I have been told I can get nothing from you in cross-examination, and I think that is true. I am convinced you cannot fool the lie detector.

If you think you are smart enough—I am not saying you are lying. I personally think you are. A lot of men think you are not. If you are lying, I know you are not smart enough to beat it. . . .

At this point, Senator Baldwin, the Chairman, pointed out that this novel idea raised a number of problems, and detailed them. Senator McCarthy was not impressed:

Senator McCARTHY. We are spending all the time trying to find out whether the claims

of brutality are true or untrue. All of the claims are made against three men. We have one of the men before us. He very reluctantly says he will—

Mr. PERL. Not reluctantly.

Senator McCARTHY. He says he will submit to the lie detector. The Chair seems to be afraid of the results of that test.

Senator BALDWIN. That is totally—

Senator McCARTHY. I am going to finish.

Senator BALDWIN. Go ahead.

Senator McCARTHY. It is fair to say that this committee is afraid of the facts. If this committee were not afraid of the facts, they would not refuse to allow these men, who I think are deliberately lying—to submit themselves to the lie-detector test and once and for all either prove or disprove these claims.

And I repeat, this confirms what I have suspected all along and that is: This committee is not concerned with getting the facts. Further, this committee is afraid of the facts, and is sitting here solely for the purpose of a whitewash of the Army and that phase of the military government in charge of those trials.

And I think it is so ridiculous, so unheard of, so inexcusable, for the chairman to say we will not allow these three key witnesses, whom many of us think are deliberately lying—

Senator BALDWIN. Senator, just let us interrupt you right there. (pp. 629-634.)

What Senator McCarthy seems to be saying in his extravagant championship of the lie detector is that he really doesn't believe that anyone can tell the difference between truth and falsehood, or *indeed that there is any observable difference. Anyone may be lying—and most likely is—if he says something in his own interest. Only the machine, he insists, can in the end tell the difference.*

At the same time that Senator McCarthy thus revealed his "philosophy," he was also acting with characteristic calculation. He knew that the lie detector had never been used by a Senate investigating committee, and would not be in this situation—that no Senator, in the words of Senator Hunt, would "set aside his own judgment for a mechanical machine." Senator McCarthy introduced this issue because, it would appear, he saw that he could get nowhere with his argument that the interrogators of the Malmédy Germans had been brutal;



he preferred therefore to blow up the whole investigation or, if possible, to slide out of the job he had undertaken—that of clearing the convicted SS men—while discrediting the subcommittee's effort to get at the truth and picking up publicity at the same time. (Indeed, the *New York Times* gave Senator McCarthy's absolutely groundless charges of whitewash, and his walking out of the subcommittee, at least as much publicity as anything else the subcommittee did—the story got a picture and a two-column head on page 3.)

## IV

**B**UT why had Senator McCarthy taken on the job of clearing convicted German war criminals in the first place? Why, indeed, did he take a position that was perilously close—for a politician with large hopes—to being pro-Nazi and anti-American, not to speak of lending ammunition, as Mr. Perl suggested, to one of the main lines of Communist propaganda? For this is just what he did. To speak of a concern for victims of possible injustice would be, in his case, farcical. It would be equally unreal to think that Senator McCarthy was angling for the votes of civil libertarians. If he had, he would have found it unnecessary to use his peculiar talents in defense of Ernst von Weizsäcker, who, as State Secretary in the German Foreign Office under Hitler, had signed orders for Jewish deportations.\* Nor would such a concern have led him to concentrate from the very beginning, as we saw from the question addressed to Secretary Royall, on seeking punishment for the army investigators and prosecutors, rather than on the prior ques-

\*Here is how Senator McCarthy characterized him when he was sentenced to a prison term by a Nuremberg war crimes court:

"Apparently the evidence is all uncontradicted, there is no question about it. It was to the effect that this was the most valuable undercover man which the Allies had in Germany, starting in 1936. The evidence is undisputed that he notified Britain before the invasion of Poland, that he kept Neville Henderson informed at all times of the negotiations prior to the signing of the Soviet-Hitler pact. . . .

tion of whether there had really been any abuse of prisoners. Nor would such a concern explain his harping on the fact—as if it were itself a crime—that refugees from Nazism were "disproportionately" represented among the Americans who prepared the war crime trials:

Senator McCarthy: I think we should find out who is responsible for hiring refugees from Hitler, men whose wives were in concentration camps, men who had every reason to dislike the German race and dislike them intensely, and the prosecution goes out and hires those individuals and gives them complete charge of the job of getting confessions. The prosecution or whoever was responsible for doing that should be asked to resign from the Army immediately.

Mr. Chairman, as we go along this picture becomes more and more gruesome. That is worse than anything we have ever accused the Russians of doing. (p. 188.)

And finally, the desire to clear the convicted men could not conceivably have led to his continual comparing of America's behavior with Russia's to our own disadvantage, a comparison repeated again and again in these hearings, and whose unjustness could only serve to infuriate American officers and officials, as it did infuriate Sec-

"So that we have here a man who was our principal undercover man. The court apparently . . . was firmly convinced—they could not have been otherwise—that this man was the principal undercover man we had in Germany. There was no doubt about that at all.

"However, in the process of getting information for us and in the process of getting this information and passing it on to us, he had to be friendly with some of the Nazis and that, therefore, he should get 7 years.

"I think this committee should see what type of morons—and I use the term advisedly—are running the military court over there. . . ."

The kernel of truth which set Senator McCarthy off on this fantastic flight was that, like other Germans who bore important responsibilities for the horrors of the Third Reich, Von Weizsäcker had tried to cover himself for the future by feeding hints to the British. In his timidity, he had covered his tracks so thoroughly that these hints, when they did reach their destination, were never taken seriously. For a full and authoritative account, see Sir Lewis Namier's analysis of Von Weizsäcker's memoirs, in his *In the Nazi Era*, 1952.



retary Royall. This comparison obviously had a political point: one could almost hear, under "This is worse than anything the Russians have done," the real meaning: "This is worse than anything the Germans did," and the intended effect: "Not the Germans, but the Americans, committed atrocities."

IN ANY case, this was the net effect of everything Senator McCarthy did at the Malmédy hearings. He was not appealing to Nazi sympathizers, but he was appealing to that whole broad spectrum in American opinion of which pro-Nazism formed an extreme wing.\* It is this element that has been Senator McCarthy's strongest support since the Malmédy case; it was with this element that Senator McCarthy decided, in the Malmédy hearings, to identify himself.

Many Americans, as we know, did not support the war against the Axis with enthusiasm. This element was not an *ad hoc* amalgamation, but a permanent grouping of some size and influence in American politics. As Samuel Lubell has shown, the "isolationists" were made up primarily of Americans of German descent, uncomfortable at going to war against Germany, and Americans of Irish descent whose hatred of England had consistently cast them into an

\*It was a strong German sympathizer, Walter Harnischfeger, who had, according to the account of Anderson and May, put Senator McCarthy up to the job. Harnischfeger, they assert, had lent an official of his firm to help Senator McCarthy to prepare the case, and had most likely put him in touch with Dr. Rudolph Aschenauer in Germany, who supplied him with statements taken directly from the war criminals. (Dr. Aschenauer, it later turned out, was a Communist agent!)

Walter Harnischfeger was a wealthy industrialist, and might be expected to be grateful. There is a letter extant from Senator McCarthy to his banker, Matt Schuh, dated May 9, 1947, well before the Arundel and Lustron episodes, and when Senator McCarthy was in financial straits, which reads: "I have made complete arrangements with Walter Harnischfeger, of Harnischfeger Corporation, to put up sufficient collateral to cure both our ulcers. . . ." The letter then goes on to say that the Senator had missed Harnischfeger, and had not been able to complete these arrangements. See *McCarthy*, pp. 162-164, 258.

isolationist and even directly pro-German position (Germany, after all, had supported the Irish rebels in the First World War). It included others too: there were Socialists, pacifists, and liberals; and there were also industrialists who found fascism for some reason attractive, anti-Semites, and others. But it was persons of German and Irish descent who formed the largest and most stable part of this heterogeneous coalition.

This grouping has had a strange history. Together with other sections of the American electorate, it was responsible for the great Democratic defeat of 1946 that brought Senator McCarthy to the Senate. But in 1948 the war was fading. The old isolationists found their economic interests in conflict with their ethnic emotions, and they returned in good part to the Democratic fold. During this early postwar period, the isolationism that had flared up so fiercely in 1940 and 1941 seemed to have left few political after-effects—Senator McCarthy himself defeated an isolationist leader, Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., in the Republican primary for Senator in 1946, and took a general and ambiguous position in his campaign—by no means a simple isolationist one.

But no body of opinion, once it has come into existence, simply disappears, even though it may be submerged for a while: as Samuel Lubell points out, a given body of opinion offers an irresistible appeal to politicians, who know that the evocation of the slogans that created it may call it to life again and win its support. But more than this, by 1949 many straws in the wind showed that the old isolationist bloc of the early 1940's was reemerging. The growing tension with Russia produced a division that sharply paralleled the old one. On the surface it would appear that the old isolationism, insofar as it was based on a sympathy for Germany, should have been among the strongest supports of a policy to enlist the Germans against the Russian threat. But the pro-Germanism at the bottom of isolationism had been, not only an underground, but even an unconscious, feeling; from the



first it had expressed itself negatively rather than positively, and what it expressed was distaste for European "entanglements" that had the unfortunate result, among other things, of putting America in opposition to Germany. This helps explain the old mystery of why the so-called "isolationists" can be quite enthusiastic about overseas involvements so long as they are across the Pacific. They just don't want to *think* about Europe.

**T**HUS, the old isolationists were no friends of European involvement in general, even when directed against Russia alone. But it was a more important factor that helped reconstitute the old isolationist bloc. It had begun to dawn on American public opinion that our sympathy with Russia during the war was fostered by more than considerations of national policy (the Hiss case broke in August 1948), and dissatisfaction began to stir in many Americans with the way the Democrats had handled our wartime and postwar relations with Russia. Those who had wholeheartedly supported the war expressed their dissatisfaction in one way; those who had not, in quite another. The latter saw in revelations of Communist spy rings and infiltration the belated justification for their position: now, they could say, it was not we who dragged our feet who were guilty of disloyalty; quite the contrary, those who were most enthusiastic about pressing the war now turn out to be disloyal—indeed, they may have been traitors.

As soon became clear, the violent anti-Communism of the old isolationists had nothing in common with any realistic policy to check Communist expansion. The isolationists remained uninterested in pacts or military aid programs. What they were, and are, primarily interested in was self-justification. In the early days, indeed, opposition to Communism played so little a role as compared with self-justification, that Senator McCarthy could try to exploit a Communist propaganda line, as we saw, in his effort to discredit our own conduct of

the war and occupation. What the isolationist element was really saying, and what Senator McCarthy was intimating to them, was: we were right in being against the war, traitors led us into it.

The reemergence of isolationism explains the role and the line McCarthy adopted at the Malmédy hearings. He was making the first move to define himself as isolationism's contemporary spokesman and apologist. The next target was already in sight: the "Communists," under which label not only could possible Communist sympathizers in the State Department be assailed, but, even more important, all those who had led the war against Germany, from Roosevelt, Marshall, and Eisenhower down. Malmédy was but the prelude. Now the big show opened, and the technique of wholesale distortion was exploited for all it was worth to identify Communism with Roosevelt's and Truman's foreign policy.\*

This line began to pay off immediately; contributions poured in from friends and strangers. His agitated correspondence with banker Matt Schuh finally comes to a close as a rain of dollars descends on the great Communist-hunter.

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\*This analysis is of course in direct contradiction to Senator McCarthy's assertion, in his book *McCarthyism*, that Communist influences on American policy were his major concern from the day he came to Washington: "Day after day I came in contact with convincing evidence of treason. . . . But how to arouse the public to danger before it was too late?" (p. 2). But it is hardly likely that Senator McCarthy would have waited three years to make his evidence of "treason" public. In any case, the evidence he used early in 1950 was lifted from a Congressional report of 1948, sometime after the period to which this passage refers.

One should also point out that while McCarthy attacked the State Department and American foreign policy for his own motives and with his own techniques, he had a rather better case against the State Department than he did against the army. On the record—which this article does not pretend to analyze—there were Communists in important posts in the State Department and elsewhere, and Communist influence in others. It is not easy at this point to get any clear picture of the extent of this influence. It has been obscured as much by the self-protectiveness of the late administration as by the irresponsibility of many of those attacking it.



## V

WHEN all the elements that had opposed the war against Germany, including the anti-Semites, flocked to Senator McCarthy's standard, and when it was discovered that his chief investigator, ex-FBI man Don Surine, bore the message from Gerald L. K. Smith in Washington to Benjamin Freedman that produced the "evidence" that Anna M. Rosenberg was a "Communist," there was little cause for surprise. Nor was it any surprise that Senator McCarthy's speech on Governor Stevenson should be delivered from the citadel of the old isolationism, introduced by the old chairman of the America First Committee, and paid for by former members.

Of course, McCarthy has other supporters, too. There are those who thought that the honest and informed criticism of State Department policy made, before McCarthy's arrival, by Representative Judd and Senator Ferguson and many other Republicans, and by some Democrats, did not suffice against the threat inherent in the presence in the State Department of individuals who had, or had had, connections with Communists.

But the larger part of respectable opinion in this country was revolted by Senator McCarthy—many, indeed, were not only revolted but quite frightened. The question that has begun to agitate them is how far he may go. They even wonder whether he is capable of emulating in any way the late master of the big lie.

To date, one must admit that there are no resemblances at all and it is on the face of it farfetched to compare a man who commanded a totalitarian movement with one who commands only investigators and, perhaps, press agents.

To say that the difference is in the times and the place, and not in the men, may be true—but it may also be to say all. Senator McCarthy is unpleasant and he is even dangerous, but we must be careful in defining in just what ways he is dangerous.

POLITICAL definition—and at the Malmédy hearings Senator McCarthy did finally

define himself politically—also means limitation. If Senator McCarthy is the idol of the old isolationist element, it is nevertheless important to point out that this element has never formed anything near a majority in American politics, and has generally had a touch-and-go fight of it in the states in which it is strongest. Nor has it ever managed to nominate a Presidential candidate. Even if those sincere anti-Communists who are willing to stomach Senator McCarthy are added, McCarthy is still far short of what it takes to swing a national convention—that is, if one takes the present constitution of the American electorate as more or less stable.

Consequently, if Senator McCarthy, who is still only forty-four, is really thinking seriously of the Presidency, as certain observers believe, he must find ways to broaden his appeal and expand his political image, which is now too sharp and narrow. This is no simple task in America, where a politician, for better or for worse, is usually defined for the rest of his career by his first appearance on the national scene. A politician may be ruined for beliefs he held twenty years before—and while this penalizes an honest change of mind, it makes it no simple matter for an opportunist who has taken up a position for temporary advantage to live it down.

Senator McCarthy's behavior since his reelection suggests that he is well aware of this problem. There is his surprisingly moderate reelection statement, and the intermittent suggestions that his Committee on Government Expenditures will devote itself to various useful undertakings. But I believe that the "respectable" path will not prove satisfying very long, for the moderation of a Joe McCarthy will win over nobody. And if, despairing of attracting new supporters, he remains what he started out as, then we know pretty much the limits of his power and may properly urge his fellow Senators and those among the public at large who fear him to take heart.

His present power, of course, is not inconsiderable. A second-term Senator, by



Constitutional provision and customary privilege, swings considerable weight. When to this power is added the talents of a Senator McCarthy it is no wonder that men will walk humbly. But when one thinks of the matter realistically, one finds that Senator McCarthy's power is in good measure given to him by those who refuse to make use of their own, and who exaggerate his. All that Senator McCarthy can do on his own authority that someone equally unpleasant and not a Senator can't, is to haul people down to Washington for a grilling by his committee. It is a shame and an outrage that Senator McCarthy should remain in the Senate; yet I cannot see that it is an imminent danger to personal liberty in the United States. He has unquestionably hurt a number of guiltless people; he has undoubtedly damaged the effectiveness of government agencies carrying important responsibilities in the fight against Communism. In this, he has certainly been aided by a press which, bound by its own canons of what constitutes objectivity and newsworthiness, has given the widest publicity to his every irresponsible charge, and has found no way of enabling the truth to catch

up with the misstatement. But in the end, our political structure sets a limit to his power, and he has already reached it.

There is one qualification, and it is an important one. Senator McCarthy's tissue of distortion did imply in the end one big untruth. This was that treason was responsible for our political defeats since the end of the war. The cry of treason is a dangerous one. One need only think of the stab-in-the-back myth that Hitler used so effectively in Germany. But the cry of treason is only effective when the community is already deeply divided, when one part of it is ready to turn on the other like wild beasts. For a while, Senator McCarthy certainly acted as if he believed this to be the case. I think he now realizes he was mistaken. But who knows if we can escape great reverses for America? There is always that possibility in times of war and near-war like our own. At such times, the charge of treason may receive wide credit, and those who were first associated with it may benefit. And if this should be the case, a man like Senator McCarthy who has, so to speak, already banked this charge, may become a positive danger.